

Submitter: Diane Meisenhelter
On Behalf Of: XRPDX
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2572

I am writing to ask for additional modifications or opposition to HB2572. As part of a climate organization regularly involved in peaceful, nonviolent actions and having participated in social justice actions, we fully understand the concerns with right-wing paramilitary organizations who have attempted to intimidate and disrupt. However, in this case we are very concerned that this bill as currently written could be utilized to silence or repress a broader group of folks involved in protests. There are already laws on the books that deal with violence against persons or property and we fear this bill could be utilized in ways to chill broader protests. For example, most peaceful non-violent protests still have a strategic “command structure” and roles that could be labeled as “combat support” such as documentation, corking (protecting marchers at intersections), deescalators or marshalls, medical teams, food and supply coordination, and the like. Even more scary is the very broad private right of action and generalized terminology about any activity which injures persons or property because already there are plenty of SLAPP suits. Furthermore, this broad language could mean that any individual false flag action, provocateur or even accidental results of individuals’ actions could suddenly lead to organizers being held responsible for something at a much higher level of penalty and charges than the normal misdemeanor charges they are willing to risk in non-violent civil disobedience (which has historically been a mainstay of positive change since the Boston Tea Party. Finally, police have often identified everyday objects as “dangerous weapons” when they have wanted to book someone and did not have sufficient evidence so that needs to be very specifically defined. We appreciate the modifications that have already been made and hope that the bill does not leave the committee without the necessary changes being proposed by numerous civil rights groups and those more familiar with the law than ourselves. We have seen the chilling effects of efforts around the world to crack down on democratic dissent, human rights defenders, and those concerned with the existential climate emergency we are facing. We do not want such legislation to become law here in Oregon and then be used as we are witnessing at the royal coronation today in England (where they are basically exercising a similar injunctive relief against those “about to” engage in protest) or the sort of actions that recently occurred in Atlanta where law enforcement colluded and ignored those destroying property while attacking peaceful demonstrators attending a concert on the edge of disputed land in a primarily Black neighborhood and charging forty-two persons with “domestic terrorism”.